

Pepperdine Policy Review

Volume 6 *Pepperdine Policy Review*

Article 10

5-27-2013

The Korean Conflict and the United States National Security

Matthew Smith

Pepperdine University, School of Public Policy, amy.kennedy@pepperdine.edu

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Recommended Citation

Smith, Matthew (2013) "The Korean Conflict and the United States National Security," *Pepperdine Policy Review*: Vol. 6, Article 10.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/ppr/vol6/iss1/10>

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**The Korean Conflict and
The United States National Security**

Matthew L. Smith

I. Introduction

The United States' troubles in Asia began with the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. After World War II, the US became increasingly concerned with the threat of communism and adopted a foreign policy of containment as to prevent it from spreading to other nations (National Archives, 2012).¹ While initially focused more on Europe after the fall of East Germany, America soon faced a new communist threat: with the emergence of Korea. In the 1950's, the Korean Peninsula fell by civil war, with Americans supporting the South, and its new threat, the Soviet Union, supporting the North.

It was the fear of the Soviet Union more than the fear of communism, which fueled the conflict within Korea. The United States placed military troops south of the 38th parallel to prevent the Soviets from taking full control of the peninsula, while simultaneously removing Japanese presence (National Archives, 2012). Korea was then divided along this line, with Kim

¹ *Teaching With Documents: The United States Enters the Korean Conflict.* (2012). Retrieved from National Archives: <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/korean-conflict/>.

Il Sung forming the communist Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)² in the north, and Syngman Rhee establishing the democratic Republic of Korea (RoK).³ It was the intention of the two halves to reunite when the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union subsided.

Tensions rose, and ultimately reached the tipping point when war broke out on June 25, 1950 when North Korea attacked across the 38th parallel (National Archives, 2012). The UN Security Council declared this act to be a breach of peace and allowed nations to intervene (National Archives, 2012). Although US President Harry S. Truman sent troops, he did not have to acquire a declaration of war from Congress, as this was determined to be a "police action" on behalf of the UN (National Archives, 2012). This action by the US also conflicted with prior policy concerning Korea. Prior to the war, the US was in the process of removing its remaining troops from WWII, primarily because the Korean peninsula was beyond the boundary zone in which to prevent the spread of communism.

The United States became involved with the Korean conflict for two major reasons: the Soviet Union successfully detonated a nuclear bomb in 1949, and in the same year, Mao Zedong led the Communists to power in the revolution in China (National Archives, 2012). Since the DPRK, with Soviet support, invaded the RoK, the US immediately saw this as another example of communism's expansion. President Truman even believed this was a plan by the Chinese to infiltrate the entire Korean peninsula. In light of these events, the US continued to provide the

² Official names: 1) conventional long form: Democratic People's Republic of Korea; 2) conventional short form: North Korea; 3) local long form: Choson-minjujuui-inmin-konghwaguk; 4) local short form: Choson; 5) 조선민주주의인민공화국.

³ Official names: 1) conventional long form: Republic of Korea; 2) conventional short form: South Korea; 3) local long form: Taehan-min'guk; 4) local short form: Han'guk; 5) 대한민국.

Republic of Korea military support under the guise of the United Nations in order to prevent the spread of communism. As of now and going forward, the United States will have to determine what is necessary for its own national security if it continues to support the Republic of Korea. Along with the strategic position of the RoK, (surrounded by China, the Russian Federation, and Taiwan), and the current conflicts they might entail, the US national security strategy needs to be revisited in order to create policies for the future.

The conflict between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea has been complicated and slow-moving in tangent of a solution towards the reunification of the peninsula. The US even supports the DPRK with humanitarian aid and food supplies, though Pyongyang and the military are the actual recipients of the aid. The US national security strategy will be determined on how each states behaves and how the US responds to the current political, economic, and military actions of the two Koreas.

II. United States and North Korea Relationship

In order to understand the current situation of North Korea, one must first briefly analyze its history and the position it currently holds. After Japanese occupation from 1905 to 1950, the DPRK was led by Kim Il Sung who instituted a belief of self-reliance in order to block outside influence after end the Korean War (Central Intelligence Agency, 2012). The DPRK viewed the United States as its ultimate enemy and used propaganda to eliminate any western influence upon the civilian population (Central Intelligence Agency, 2012). Social policy led to the crumbling of the country to the point where it now nearly relies entirely on outside aid. The succession of Kim Il Sung's son, Kim Jong Il, in 1994 continued this form of governance and control. Kim Jong Il furthered the DPRK's military efforts which included the nuclear program

and long range missiles. Kim Jong Un, the son of Kim Jong Il, took lead of the country, and the future remains uncertain, but could be the pivotal point where outside influence may finally have a chance to affect policies in the country.

A. Diplomatic Issues

The United States participates in multilateral talks and agreements, most notably the Six-Party Talks with China, Russia, Japan, the DPRK, and the RoK (Chanlett-Avery & Rinehart, 2012). These talks have been mostly unsuccessful in regards to either reunifying the two Koreas or ending the war, which is technically still ongoing because a peace treaty was signed. Humanitarian aid and more importantly, food aid, are given in exchange for denuclearization and human rights policies for North Korea, in hopes of easing tensions and the complicated situation within the DPRK (Chanlett-Avery & Rinehart, 2012). Food aid tends to be a lost cause however, because the food that is given to the government is distributed to officials and the military (Chanlett-Avery & Rinehart, 2012). The majority of the population never sees any of the aid (Chanlett-Avery & Rinehart, 2012).

The governance of the DPRK is gradually moving towards a more favorable position with the United States and the RoK. Kim Jong-il led the DPRK until December 2011, and the country was in dire need of aid, both economically and food wise (Manyin & Nikitin, 2012).⁴ The controlling regime under Kim Jong-il preferred the military of nearly 1.5 million soldiers, while the people suffered greatly (Manyin & Nikitin, 2012). The United States' policy towards the DPRK has been to ease tensions through humanitarian and food aid in hopes of ending the

⁴ Manyin, M. E., & Nikitin, M. B. (2012). *Foreign Assistance to North Korea*. Washington DC: Congressional Research Service.

nuclear program (Manyin & Nikitin, 2012). Since the start of its program in the 1950's, the DPRK announced it has two nuclear devices, and regardless of how crude these two devices may be they present the capability to bring devastation to Seoul and other cities within the RoK remains a real concern. The threat of nuclear warfare coupled with missiles aimed at the RoK provides a constant military threat that endangers the United States as long as it maintains a presence on the Korean peninsula. No matter how powerful the threat of a DPRK nuclear attack, there are other issues that are just as pressing: alliances, human rights, and the DPRK missile programs (Manyin & Nikitin, 2012).

B. Effect of United States' Alliances and the DPRK

The United States must be extremely careful when dealing with its own alliances that concern the DPRK, and it must consider alliances of the DPRK. The United States maintains three key alliances that affect the interaction with the DPRK: China, the RoK, and Japan (Manyin & Nikitin, 2012).⁵ The relationship with Japan is similar to that of China, where aid and humanitarian efforts are provided, but seems to be under the mentality that as long as the DPRK is not an issue, it can ignore most of what is going on. Japan had issues in the past because of the DPRK's abduction of Japanese citizens (Manyin & Nikitin, 2012). China, however, has more of a concern with the refugees that flee North Korea and flood into Jilin and Liaoning provinces. US policies towards China put a large emphasis on the refugee problem since the US has special provisions for those who can make it to the continental area (Manyin &

⁵ Ibid.

Nikitin, 2012).⁶ China continues to be at the forefront of policy making because of its continued diplomatic and economic assistance to the DPRK (Manyin & Nikitin, 2012).⁷

The alliance with the RoK is particularly critical with extremely high tensions. The DPRK and the RoK are still at war; therefore all policies associated with the two nations can have serious effects on the progress of peace talks and US security (Hlad, 2012). The two primary threats to the DPRK are the RoK and the United States. Neighboring countries are not seen as allies or as enemies because of the government's severe isolationist policy. High tensions can be seen in cases such as the sinking of the *Cheonan*, a South Korean warship sunk by a DPRK submarine in 2010 and the failed ballistic missile tests in 2011-12 (Cha, 2010). As the DPRK continues its aggressive tactics against the RoK, the United States will have to continually monitor relations and actions.

III. United States and the Republic of Korea

Since the division of the Korean peninsula after World War II, the United States maintained influence on the Republic of Korea and assisted in the development of the country. This was the main foothold in East Asia to prevent the spread of communism from the Soviet Union and China. Through the years, the position of the RoK has changed. In the 1990's, President Kim Dae-jung adopted the "Sunshine Policy," a similar variant on Ostpolitik.⁸ (Bajoria & Youkyung, 2011). Food and humanitarian aid were offered in return for refugees, POW's, and policy changes. Relations receded through the leadership of the current president, Lee

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Bajoria, J., & Youkyung, L. (2011, October 13). *The US-South Korea Alliance*. Retrieved from Council of Foreign Relations: <http://www.cfr.org/south-korea/us-south-korea-alliance/p11459#p4>.

Myung-bak, as he held a stronger stance on a non-nuclear DPRK, and accepted more of the UN resolution that have condemned human rights in the DPRK through Vision 3000⁹ (Bajoria & Youkyung, 2011). This led to scrutiny against the United States and citizens criticized President Lee for being a puppet of the US and the west. For US national security, these increased tensions led to a new response strategies and contingency plans in the event of a DPRK military attack.

A. Nuclear Concerns

The nuclear program of the DPRK has an intense and important effect on the relationship between the United States and the RoK. This started with the US-North Korean Agreed Framework in 1994, where the DPRK would stop the construction of nuclear facilities that were for research into nuclear weapons and the United States would provide fuel oil as a replacement energy source (Kimball, Crail & Goggin, 2004). The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO)¹⁰ was then created to implement the agreement (Kimball et al., 2004). The DPRK was found to be enriching uranium in 2002, ending the shipments of oil and raising tensions. This situation was heightened during the Bush administration. President Bush included the DPRK in “Axis of Evil” in his 2002 State of the Union address, referring to the failed nuclear policy that was started in 1994 (Kimball et al., 2004). As the DPRK announced it had nuclear weapons and conducted long range ballistic missile tests, the US and RoK enacted harsher policies in response.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Members include: The United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea.

The alliance between the RoK and United States' began to strain as the US began to enforce stricter policies towards the DPRK, while the RoK questioned if these actions would further provoke the DPRK (Kimball et al., 2004). The RoK had to plan more delicately because if the DPRK were to attack, it would be against the RoK. In the mid-2000's, the US-RoK relationship was at one of its weakest points as the United States placed blame on the RoK for not following its policies it was instituting against the DPRK, and the RoK blamed the US for ignoring all efforts it had made with the DPRK (Bajoria & Lee, 2011). The Six Party Talks, created a new process for the disarmament of nuclear weapons in the DPRK, but as the DPRK failed to meet the benchmarks the talks began to fail. President Lee Myung-bak and President Bush both stiffened policies towards the DPRK in 2008, but currently these have had minimal effect (Bajoria & Lee, 2011).

B. Effect of US Military in South Korea

The most notable issue between the US and the RoK is the presence of the US military south of the 38th parallel. US Defense Secretary Robert Gates and South Korean Minister of National Defense Kim Jang-so reaffirmed the US Force Korea (USFK) which combined air, ground, and naval forces between the two nations until 2012 (Bajoria & Lee, 2011). Recent incidents with the DPRK led to the countries to extend the agreement until 2015 (House Armed Services Committee, 2012). The presence of the US military is a long term concern of the citizens of the RoK, stemming from incidents in 2002 where two teenagers were fatally injured by military vehicles near Seoul (BBC News World Edition, 2002). Congressional members are also in support of some withdrawal processes out of the Korean conflict and away from the peninsula (Hong, 2012). A government report issued in 2011 showed signs that Congress was in favor of

trying to lessen the impact of the Korean conflict and remove military personnel by the end of the contract for the USFK (Manyin, Chanlett-Avery & Nikitin, 2011). Even though relations in the past were strained under the Bush Administration, they improved under the Obama Administration, even to the point where the RoK seen as the United States' strongest ally in East Asia (Manyin, Chanlett-Avery, Nikitin & Taylor, 2010).

The Current State of Affairs: US-China relationship

IV. United States and China

The United States has a wavering relationship with China in regards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea due to China and the US take different views of how to resolve the issue of the DPRK. One theory is that the collapse of the DPRK would lead to the consolidation of the Korean peninsula, with the US supported RoK taking control (Kaplan, 2006). However, if this were to happen, China, who already has serious concerns about having the United States this close to the mainland, has interests in what may happen as a result of the Korean conflict¹¹ (Snyder, 2012). The United States must be prepared to respond if the regime of the DPRK falls.

The Korean conflict has strongly affected US-China relations ever since the start. The United States supported the RoK during the Korean War while the Chinese supported the DPRK. Although these two countries were on opposite sides for many years, the nuclear threat of the DPRK has provided an opportunity for the two sides to work together (Snyder, 2011). The first nuclear test performed by the DPRK was in late 2002 and both sides were able to work together to create a strategy for dealing with the new DPRK nuclear threat, but tensions grew again after

¹¹ Snyder, S. A. (2012). *Instability in North Korea and Its Impact on US-China Relations*. Retrieved from Council of Foreign Relations: www.cfr.org/content/.../CPA_china_security_memo2_Snyder.pdf.

the second nuclear test in 2009 (Snyder, 2011). China decided to maintain economic ties with the DPRK, while the US supported the UN Security Council's decision to enforce sanctions on the DPRK as a means to attempt to stymie the nuclear threat (Snyder, 2011).

In an interview with Adam Segal in 2010, Ira A. Lipman, Senior Fellow for Counterterrorism and National Security Studies, states that China's relationship with the DPRK has more or less maintained the status quo because China is reluctant to place pressure on the DPRK. This trend will most likely remain unchanged unless the DPRK tests another nuclear device or puts its military into a situation that compromises Chinese national security (Segal, 2012). For US national security, reliance on relations with Beijing will continue to be problematic if the two countries cannot agree on a strategy for containing the threat that stems from the Korean conflict.

The Current United States' National Security Strategy

During the Obama administration North Korea remains a national security concern. According to realist political theory, nation states will build up their own country in terms of development of the military and economy in order to provide protection for themselves, but in the case of North Korea, the US is attempting to do so in a different way.

A. The Nuclear Threat

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) requires the reduction of atomic weapons by all nation states in order to provide increased security and prevent a nuclear conflict (The White House, 2010). The United States declares that it is reducing its own nuclear arsenal as a part of the NPT, and that it is working to hold other nation states accountable. North Korea has created an unfavorable situation when it withdrew from the NPT in 1994 (The White House,

2010), and now the United States does not have authorization to use force to make North Korea a non-nuclear state. In this case, the United States must use deterrence in order to provide adequate protection against the North Korean threat. Even as the US is reducing its nuclear arsenal, it must be at a level to continue to deter North Korea from a nuclear strike and America must be able to retaliate with second strike capability in the event an attack (Huntley, 2010).

First strike capability¹² is still an advantage of the United States. The US has a much larger nuclear arsenal to utilize in the event of an eminent threat by the DPRK (Union of Concerned Scientists, 2010). Second, the US can and operational capabilities could destroy Pyongyang in a single strike, decimating DPRK leadership¹³ (Federation of American Scientists, 2000). The North Koreans simply do not have the capabilities to launch a similar attack against the United States (Nikitin, 2013). Finally, the United States has second strike ability while the DPRK would not survive the first strike by the US (NDU Press, n.d.). These facts make deterrence effective for now, but the DPRK continually tests long range missiles there exists has quickly eroded this advantage option requiring.

B. Sanctions

In addition to sanctions the United States is involved in the Six Party Talks, which requires the cooperation of other neighboring countries. Sanctions for the most part are ineffective in persuading the DPRK to denuclearize, but instead have hurt the people more (Carpenter & Preble, 2006). Along with this policy, humanitarian aid to the country is

¹² Defined as “the policy that reserves the right to use nuclear weapons against an enemy before that enemy employs a like weapon without any constraints on the decision to employ the weapon,” by Col. Rosemary M. Carter.

¹³ *Overview - Target: North Korea*. (2000, March 1). Retrieved from Federation of American Scientists: <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/dprk/target/overview.htm>.

ineffective as well. Food and medical supplies that are brought to the DPRK are given to the military instead of the population (Manyin & Nikitin, 2012). This has put a particularly hard strain on the citizens of North Korea. The DPRK continues to test long range ballistic missiles, build its military, and continues to increase its nuclear capabilities. The ineffectiveness of these policies should lead to creation of new policies for the United States towards the DPRK.

C. Cyber Warfare

Cyber warfare is a growing threat to the US national security by the military of North Korea as the Department of Homeland Security has shown an increase of cyber-attacks by 800% between 2005 and 2007¹⁴ (Lee, 2011). The South Korean National Intelligence Service also traced cyber-attacks to Pyongyang (Lee, 2011). Due to the conditions within North Korea, the military for the most part is weak despite its large numbers, but cyber terrorism is at the forefront of its abilities (Benitez, 2012).

Terrorism through cyber-attacks is beneficial for North Korea as it is much cheaper to employ than conventional military capabilities (Yoon, 2011). Computer capabilities are widely available to the military, and cyber warfare training can be given to all members. Cyber warfare has been linked Mirim University (Pyongyang Automation University), Amrokgang College of Military Engineering, The National Defense University, The Air Force Academy, and the Naval University (Yoon, 2011). The main personnel training at these locations are for computer hacking and electronic warfare tactics (Yoon, 2011). This system utilized by the North Koreans

¹⁴ Lee, S. (2011). *U.S. Security Strategy toward North Korea's Cyber Terrorism*. Washington: Carnegie Institution for Science.

becomes far more difficult for the United States to track the capabilities and locations of the DPRK's nuclear program.

Currently, the United States and South Korea are both battling against North Korean cyber warfare, but it is proving difficult as the cyber battlefield is a much more elusive. The United States is currently employing a defensive and offensive strategy, but North Korea still maintains thousands of attacks each year which is proving to be successful against the US. The North Koreans are gaining ground, according to current reports, on US military and corporate databases, indicating that the US must place more emphasis on protecting its virtual and cyber interests as North Korea continues to pour resources into its own program (Robertson, 2011).

V. The New United States' National Security Strategy

After reviewing of the position of the United States with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, and China, a strategy for the United States national security can be created. In order to be prepared for the future, four scenarios will be proposed. These are: 1) North Korean collapse: the fall of the governing body with the need for a massive humanitarian response; 2) North Korean military eruption: a strategic military confrontation initiated by the DPRK; 3) North Korean political crisis: a failure of the current administration leading to a civil war; 4) the rise of North Korea: a sudden growth of the development of the economy and industry within the country leading to a successful nuclear terrorist attack towards the RoK, China, US, or Japan (Robertson, 2011).

It should be noted that US has national security interests towards the DPRK because a complete failure of the RoK's governing system and stability is highly unlikely at this time as it is heavily supported by the US and other nations that share economic interests in the RoK. A situation with the DPRK at this time is proportionally higher considering current political, economic, and military conditions surrounding the country; therefore the United States should focus more efforts in this direction (Jannuzi, 1999).

A. Scenario 1: North Korean Collapse

At this time, the government of Kim Jong-un is fragile as economic conditions continue to be a major concern. Along with a poor economy, there are a variety of other factors that are leading to the instability of the DPRK. If there is an implosion then a vast number of refugees

will flee the country, a massive humanitarian effort will be required to address those who have not left the country, and the government will need to be stabilized (Jannuzi, 1999).¹⁵

Refugees in the past escaped typically fled North Korea through the northern border with China, mainly at the location along the Yalu River and Tumen River (Pinilla, 2004). Due to the border wall at the 38th parallel, refugees are not able to enter the RoK; however, refugees can escape through China to the RoK and receive citizenship in South Korea (Pinilla, 2004). The United States must be extremely careful when dealing with policies that concern China and the RoK, specifically on the refugee issue.

The US will either have to provide financial aid to China and/or the RoK for assistance with refugees or it will have to put ground troops within these countries to provide additional resources. This can lead to new alliances, contracts, or treaties between the countries that could possibly alter existing conditions. Along with this notion is the fact that the United Nations would become involved which would complicate matters to a higher extent.

The United States and South Korea relationship would be strained with the issue of refugees because of varying views about how to provide a solution for the possible influx of people into the RoK. Chapter 1, Article 4 of the South Korean constitution states that the reunification of the Korean peninsula is the goal of the RoK, but in reality the RoK does not want a mass migration of North Korea's unification (Constitutional Court of Korea, 2009; Bennett & Julie, 2011). A unification of the peninsula would be a heavy financial burden as well as a social burden on the Republic of Korea and the United States. Humanitarian aid from the

¹⁵ Ibid.

United States would have be brought in to meet the demands and needs of the people, including the possibility of an influx of North Korean nationals being brought into the United States.

Although this may not be a particular threat to the national security of the United States, it would be cause for concern in which international interests would become a major factor. The US must be ready for this event because the governance of North Korea is unsustainable at this current level, and the likelihood of an implosion of the government under Kim Jong-un is high.

B. Scenario 2: North Korean Military Eruption

This scenario would be the use of the military in North Korea to reassert itself as the dominant power within the country. In this case, it would use the military to assert its supremacy over its own people to quell revolt. This would be through conventional forces. The question for the US is how to react.

The United States does not have the ability to simply go into North Korea and use military force if there is an internal conflict in the DPRK. This is similar to the civil war in Syria where the UN cannot send in military forces to subdue the conflict. The problem will then come if the situation extends itself into China or South Korea. The neighboring countries pose a national security threat if the conflict is spread to the borders, US military force will be required to help maintain the fighting. US-China relations are already fluctuating; therefore, US policy will have to be delicate in how it engages any potential threats to US or Chinese national security.

One additional factor is that if the DPRK uses its own military to reconsolidate political control, the same government will still be in control of the country, leading to the same issues as before (Bennett & Julie, 2011). The United States will have to be ready to have a long term plan

for negotiating and working with this administration because at this time, there are no threats to the government due to the severity of the isolationist policy by those in control. This may be an unlikely scenario because of the current conditions of the country and the citizens, but it is possible due to the emergence and exposure of South Korean and Chinese culture within the DPRK.

C. Scenario 3: North Korean Political Crisis

A highly likely case is that the current government of North Korea fails, and a substantial and serious political instability is created. The main concerns, according to a report in *International Security*, are: “loose” nuclear weapons, humanitarian disaster, regional refugee crisis, and potential to escalation of war between China and the United States (Bennett & Lind, 2011). For this situation, a civil war may be in effect, or more likely, outside forces by South Korea, China, Japan, and the United States would be involved.

As far as the United States is concerned, this would be the worst scenario that could happen in North Korea, but is the most likely because of the isolationist policy and serious degradation of the current system. The main concern for the collapse in North Korea would not be the actual failure of the country, but would be how to react to China (O'Hanlon, 2009). Both the United States and China have interests in North Korea, and even Japan has its own security interests in the Korean peninsula that complicate the situation (O'Hanlon, 2009). The US has an agreement with Japan to lend assistance in the event that Japan is attacked, which is a likely possibility with the conflicts within North Korea.

The United States would also be obligated to lend additional military assistance to the RoK, especially along the 38th parallel where many North Koreans would be fleeing and entering the country. Although the United States supports the RoK, it will have to provide more resources because it will have to counter the Chinese threat. The DPRK is rich in resources, in which China has a vital interest; therefore the US must make policies to counter China asserting its own power in the politics of North Korea.

A major concern for the US and the neighboring countries of the DPRK is the nuclear capabilities that North Korea already has, and what may happen if the government were to collapse. The term “loose nukes” comes from the fact that these nuclear devices will no longer be controlled and could come under the authority of any number of nations or people. The United States will have to develop a strategy with the RoK in how to ascertain the information and means to control the nuclear devices located in the DPRK in order to ensure its own safety as any nuclear threat on the peninsula is a critical situation. Along with nuclear weapons, the United States and the RoK must know how to control uranium enrichment sites, such as the Yongbyon nuclear enrichment facility (Matishak, 2010). Currently, the Six Party Talks are having minimal effects engaging the DPRK and reducing its nuclear capabilities (Matishak, 2010, p. 34). However, the US must create a plan to ensure that these facilities are taken down or at least protected from outside threats that could possibly take control of these areas.

The potential threat of a US-China war could be possible if both sides find an extraordinary desire to control the political system of the DPRK. China has an interest in natural resources while the US would want to promote democracy and the eventual takeover by the RoK. China would consider a possible US takeover a major threat to its own security and to the

Chinese government structure. Meanwhile, the US would consider the control of the DPRK a threat to South Korea and to the region in general. In order to prevent either side from gaining too much control, a possible war would be conceivable.

The United States must be prepared for a major military and humanitarian commitment following the dissolution of the North Korean government that would involve China and the RoK. All policies will have to prevent nuclear threats, refugee issues, or a potential war between the US and China. The current administration under Kim Jong-un is frail and weakening which means that the United States must be prepared for this scenario in the short term future.

D. Scenario 4: The Rise of North Korea

This scenario is the proliferation of the North Korean nuclear program where it has the capabilities to attack the RoK, China, or Japan with an atomic strike. The DPRK poured much of its own resources into the development of the nuclear program, but at this current state, it is still feeble and small considered to the US and the RoK. However, this does not mean that it cannot develop technologies that will be successful in creating nuclear havoc. The United States must be prepared for an imminent attack on the RoK or Japan, in which there are treaties with both countries to immediately help in the event of an attack. The question then becomes whether the US will respond with a nuclear attack back onto the DPRK, especially considering the close proximity of China, South Korea, and Japan.

The United States will not be able to retaliate unilaterally, but will have to do so as a multilateral force, therefore it will have to improve existing relations with East Asian countries (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2013). The UN would be a viable option,

especially with Ban Ki-moon of South Korea as the Secretary General of the UN. International cooperation should be the highlight of the US national security strategy and foreign policy. Regardless, the US will have to improve its relationship with China and Russia in order to prevent this scenario from happening, which is a possibility due to the direction the North Korean government and military is aiming for today.

VI. Conclusion

The Korean conflict, starting back from the early days after World War II through today, remains an issue with the United States and its national security. The support of the Republic of Korea put the US in a position in East Asia where many may argue that the US does not have a reason to be there. The result is that the United States is the highlighted enemy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and now this threat is increasing every day. Although the US has a national security strategy, it does not focus enough efforts towards quelling the issues concerning North Korea.

The United States needs to readdress the issues concerning North Korea, and with the support of the international community, especially those in East Asia. North Korea poses a serious threat, and it could be past the point of diplomacy as the DPRK continues to increase its own capabilities to fight against the threat it sees from the United States. After reviewing the United States' relationships with North Korea, South Korea, and China needs to be improved in order to create a stronger plan for the national security interests as the focus turns towards East Asia (Department of Defense, 2012, p. 2).

The four scenarios that could occur within North Korea should all be a part of the US national security strategy, or at least a contingency plan for if any of these occur. Any of these could happen in the near future and the United States should be ready for any event. Even the threat of cyber-terrorism needs to be better addressed so that the US can contain and eliminate any threat because this is the one area that the North Koreans can and already may have the advantage over the US.

As the United States moves in the future, it needs to ensure, for its own national security, that it does not neglect the threat that stems from the DPRK. Also, the US should pay particular attention to Kim Jong-un and his current administration because unlike his predecessors, the US has the opportunity to engage diplomatically with North Korea. He is the most open and willing leader of North Korea, far beyond what was capable for Kim Jong-il and Kim Il-sung. For the United States' national security plan, the US needs to utilize all avenues of engagement to reduce the threat from North Korea. It is only through complete preparedness and international cooperation that the US can protect its national security interests.

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